

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5420
RUSSELL SPLANE/MIAMI

JANUARY 3, 1978

THE NEW YEAR'S FIRST SPACE LAUNCH
(INDIAN OCEAN AREA)

ANNCR:

THE U.S. SPACE AGENCY WILL BEGIN A BUSY NEW YEAR WITH THE FIRST LAUNCH OF 1978 SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 6TH. VOA'S RUSSELL SPLANE SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM FLORIDA.

VOICE:

THE FIRST OF 16 SCHEDULED SPACE LAUNCHES IN 1978 IS SET FOR LIFT-OFF ON THE EVENING OF JANUARY 6TH FROM CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA. IT WILL BE THE FIFTH INTELSAT COMMERCIAL COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE DESIGNED FOR SERVICE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION. THE INTELSAT IV-A (FOUR-AAY) SATELLITE WILL BE LIFTED OFF COMPLEX 36-BEE AT THE KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (AT 7:19 PM EST). IT IS SLATED TO BE PARKED IN A GEO-STATIONARY ORBIT AT THE EQUATOR, OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN AT 63 DEGREES EAST LONGITUDE. FROM THAT SPOT, 36-THOUSAND KILOMETERS ABOVE THE EARTH, THE SATELLITE WILL PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES TO SOME 40 COUNTRIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION. BECAUSE THE SPEED OF THE SPACECRAFT IN ORBIT MATCHES THE ROTATIONAL SPEED OF THE EARTH, THE SATELLITE WILL REMAIN IN POSITION OVER THE SAME SPOT.

THE INTELSAT FOUR-AAY SATELLITE, BUILT BY HUGHES AIRCRAFT COMPANY IN CALIFORNIA, IS NEARLY SEVEN METERS TALL AND WEIGHS MORE THAN 1500 KILOGRAMS. THE SATELLITE IS DESIGNED TO SERVE FOR SEVEN YEARS, AND HAS THE CAPACITY TO RELAY MORE THAN SIX-THOUSAND SIMULTANEOUS TELEPHONE CALLS AND TWO TELEVISION PROGRAMS.

THE INTELSAT SATELLITES ARE OWNED BY THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CORPORATION. THE ONE TO BE LAUNCHED THIS WEEK REPRESENTS AN INVESTMENT OF APPROXIMATELY 295-MILLION DOLLARS BY 101 NATIONS.

THE INTELSAT IS SCHEDULED TO BE CARRIED ALOFT BY AN ATLAS CENTAUR LAUNCH VEHICLE. THE KENNEDY SPACE CENTER IN FLORIDA SAYS THIS WILL BE THE FIRST OF EIGHT ATLAS CENTAUR LAUNCHES SCHEDULED FOR THE YEAR AHEAD. IN ADDITION, EIGHT OTHER SATELLITES WILL BE LAUNCHED BY DELTA ROCKETS. THE SECOND LAUNCH OF THE YEAR -- ALSO ABOARD AN ATLAS CENTAUR -- WILL BE A SATELLITE DESIGNED TO BE PART OF THE U.S. NAVY'S WORLDWIDE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK.

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1